

We claim:

Sub A3
5 1. A method for controlling the absorption of a liquid sample through an absorbent layer, comprising the steps of

10 (a) providing an air gap defined by an absorbent layer, at least one side wall and a translucent window; and

(b) applying a liquid sample to the absorbent layer on the side opposite to the air gap;

15 whereby sample absorption is controlled by preventing the release of air from the air gap.

20 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the sample is a human body fluid.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the fluid is a blood sample.

25 4. An apparatus comprising an absorbent layer, at least one side wall and a translucent window, wherein the layer, walls and window define an air gap.

5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the window is non-fogging.

30 6. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the absorbent layer contains a reagent that indicates the presence of an analyte.

- 7. The apparatus of claim 4, further comprising a second layer in contact with the absorbent layer.